

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 2306

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, BC
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT'S REMARKS ON GENEVA, RHODESIA AND SECURITY

REF: GABORONE 2291

1. SUMMARY: DURING INFORMAL CONVERSATION FOLLOWING MY PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS DECEMBER 14 (SEPTTEL), PRESIDENT KHAMA VOLUNTEERED COMMENT ON GENEVA CONFERENCE AND RHOESIAN INCURSIONS INTO BOTSWANA. HIS REMARKS REINFORCE VIEW, REPORTED REFTTEL, THAT INCREASING VIOLATIONS OF BOTSWANA'S TERRITORY BY RHODESIAN FORCES ARE PUSHING GOB UNWILLINGLY TO A POSITION WHICH REQUIRES RETALIATION AND INCREASED DEFENSE EXPENDITURES. END SUMMARY.

2. GENEVA. PRESIDENT EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT THAT TALKS HAD NOT BEEN MORE SUCCESSFUL. HE BLAMED INTRASIGENCE ON BOTH SIDES. ("I REALIZE THE FAULT IS NOT ALL ON SMITH'S SIDE.") HE SAID THE BITTERNESS

OF SO MANY YEARS OF FIGHTING ("MORE THAN TEN YEARS NOW") WAS HARD TO OVERCOME. AFTER SHARPLY CRITICISING SMITH FOR APPEARING TO REJECT THE UK OFFER OF "HIGH COMMISSIONER" TYPE ROLE IN RHODESIA DURING THE TRANSITION GOVERNMENT, HE SAID HE FOUND IT STRANGE THAT SMITH WOULD SPURN THIS OFFER WHEN IT SEEMED THE ONE COMPROMISE "ACCEPTABLE TO MOST OF US" (WE ASSUME HE MEANT THE FRONTLINE PRESIDENTS). HE FEARED THAT SMITH, "WHO REPRESENTS A CERTAIN SECTION OF WHITE RHODESIAN OPINION",
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MIGHT COME TO THE REGARDED BY BLACK AFRICA AS TYPIFYING ALL

WHITES IN AFRICA.

3. RHODESIA: OBVIOUSLY REFERRING TO DECEMBER 11 KIDNAPPING OF THREE BOTSWANA BY RHODESIAN FORCES (SEPTTEL), HE SAID WHETHER SUCH RAIDS WERE CONDUCTED BY WHITE OR BLACK SECURITY FORCES WAS IRRELEVANT; THEY WERE SEEN BY BATSWANA (AND OTHERS) AS CARRYING OUT THE ORDERS OF SMITH, LEADER OF THE RHODESIAN WHITE COMMUNITY. HE REFERRED TO BOTSWANA'S NON-RACIALISM AND SAID THAT THIS IDENTIFICATION OF THE SMITH REGIME WITH ALL WHITES WOULD BE A TRAGIC DEVELOPMENT AND WOULD UNDERMINE WHAT BOTSWANA HAD BEEN STRIVING FOR DURING THE PAST DECADE.

4. SECURITY: PRESIDENT CONTINUED ON THE SAME THEME, STRESSING THAT THE INCREASING NUMBER OF BORDER INCURSIONS, MURDERS AND KIDNAPPINGS BY RHODESIAN AUTHORITIES WAS BRINGING THE BATSWANA TO THE LIMITS OF THEIR PATIENCE. IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR HIS GOVERNMENT CONTINUALLY TO APPEAL FOR RESTRAINT WHEN THE RHODESIANS BY THEIR ACTIONS WERE BUILDING THE ISSUE OF BORDER SECURITY INTO A HIGHLY EMOTIONAL ONE. HE CALLED SITUATION A "POWDER KEG". BOTSWANA WAS POWERLESS TO PREVENT THESE VIOLATIONS, SAID THE PRESIDENT; HE ADDED, SMILING, "I DOUBT IF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT WOULD BE VERY PLEASED IF WE WERE TO ASK YOUR TO ARM US SO WE CAN DEFEND OURSELVES." WHEN ASKED WHAT SMITH MIGHT HOPE TO GAIN FROM VIOLATION OF BOTSWANA'S SOVEREIGNTY, PRESIDENT REPLIED THAT THESE RAIDS OFTEN WERE AIMED AT CAPTURING PERSONS FOR INTERROGATION CONCERNING THE MOVEMENT OR LOCATION OF GUERRILLAS IN BOTSWANA. SMITH MIGHT BE PREPARING PUBLIC OPINION FOR A LARGE RHODESIAN OPERATION AGAINST BOTSWANA "SUCH AS THOSE AGAINST MOZAMBIQUE" BY FIRST TRYING TO CREATE IMPRESSION ABROAD THAT RAIDS WERE SIMILARLY JUSTIFIED BY EXISTENCE IN BOTSWANA OF GUERRILLA MILITARY CAMPS. (NOTE: AT A RECEPTION DECEMBER 14, PRESIDENT'S SON, IAN KHAMA, TOLD ME HE WOULD TAKE UP COMMAND OF THE MOBILE POLICE COMPANY IN FRANCISTOWN IN ABOUT THREE WEEKS. HIS FIRST ORDER WOULD BE FOR HIS MEN TO CAPTURE AND INTERROGATE ONE OR MORE RHODESIAN AGENTS IF AT ALL POSSIBLE.) PRESIDENT KHAMA WENT ON TO DENY THERE WERE GUERRILLA BASES IN BOTSWANA, BUT NOTED THAT RHODESIAN PRESS HAD RECENTLY MENTIONED ONE SUCH SUPPOSED SITE AT NATA (NORTHWEST OF FRANCISTOWN).

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5. COMMENT: AS REPORTED REFTTEL, WE VIEW APPARENTLY DELIBERATE RHODESIAN INCURSIONS AS THE PRINCIPAL CAUSE OF GROWING CONCERN AND PRESSURE WITHIN GOB AND AMONG GENERAL PUBLIC TO INCREASE BOTSWANA'S CAPABILITY FOR SELF-DEFENSE. PRESIDENT'S ENTIRELY UNSOLICITED REMARKS CONSTITUTE FURTHER CONFIRMATION OF OUR INTERPRETATION OF BOTSWANAN PERCEPTIONS. IN ABSENCE OF INSIDE INFORMATION ON OBJECTIVES AND ATTITUDES OF SMITH REGIME,

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO KNOW WHETHER GOB FEARS OF LARGE SCALE RAID
AGAINST THE FRANCISTOWN REFUGEE CAMP ARE JUSTIFIED. THE SIG-
NIFICANT FACT REMAINS THAT THIS IS WHAT THE GOB SUSPECTS SMITH
OF PLANNING. FROM PERSPECTIVE OF OUR POLICY OBJECTIVES OF HOLD-
ING GOB TO PRESENT COURSE, INTERVENTION PROPOSED REFTTEL SEEMS
ALL THE MORE URGENT. END COMMENT.

NORLAND

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